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1969/08/04

gust 4, 1969

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Participants: Dr. Henry A. Kissinger
Major General Vernon Walters
Mr. William A. K. Lake

Xuan Thuy
Mai Van Bo
Vietnamese Notetaker
Vietnamese Interpreter

Dr. Kissinger opened the conversation by saying that he appreciated the opportunity of seeing Mr. Xuan Thuy and to be able to have direct discussions. He had known Mai Van Bo since 1967. He had always found him to show great diplomatic skill and subtlety. Dr. Kissinger said he would like to say a personal word before getting into the matter which had brought him there. He had been concerned with peace in Vietnam since 1965. Anyone who has followed Vietnamese history, particularly the events of the last five years, must be aware of the courage and dignity of the Vietnamese people. He was fully aware that after all that had happened, there was a great amount of distrust between our two peoples. But any discussions will be conducted on our side with respect for the courage and dignity of the Vietnamese people. He wondered whether there had been any answer to the letter from our President which had been delivered in Paris two weeks before. Xuan Thuy said that President Nixon's letter had been forwarded to Hanoi. It was not dated. Dr. Kissinger said the letter had actually been written three days before it had been delivered. Perhaps he should say a few things which President Nixon had asked him personally to convey.

Dr. Kissinger said that Washington had read with great care the statements that had been made at the plenary sessions and in the private meetings. Hanoi had often questioned our good will and our sincerity. It was hard for us to judge whether they did this for psychological effect or to what degree they really believed this. Dr. Kissinger said that he was there to tell them that we sincerely wanted peace and were approaching it with an attitude of good will, but he was also there to tell them how the situation appeared to us.

On November 1, 1969, the negotiations which led to the end of the bombing would be one year old. During this period, the U.S. had made what we consider to be significant moves. We had ended reinforcements, we had a partial bombing halt, then a total bombing halt, and the withdrawal of

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Dr. Kissinger then said that he suggested that they think about their discussion and we would watch what goes on at the meetings with great care. If Xuan Thuy thought another such discussion would be helpful he could call General Walters and we would arrange a visit and a meeting place, either there or at some other place. This discussion should be on matters beyond what is being discussed in the normal meetings. If they made a step significantly different from the usual steps they would find that we would meet them with a spirit of good will.

Xuan Thuy said that the same was true for them. But on our side we had only talked about methods for taking a step forward but had not offered any concrete step.

Dr. Kissinger said that President Nixon had made a proposal; we had said that we would recognize a free political process. We had stated propositions. He could not accept that we had made no propositions. We must now see where we must go. He did not want to get into detailed negotiations at this meeting. Dr. Kissinger repeated that if they showed willingness to achieve a reasonable compromise, we would not try to take advantage of them or to humiliate them.

After parting amenities the Vietnamese expressed the desire to leave first without taking leave of Mr. Sainteny as they would thank him when they saw him again.

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